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THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CRISIS

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THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CRISIS

I. ISSUE DEFINITION

On April 2, 1982, an Argentine naval force seized and occupied the British crown colony of the Falkland Islands and its dependency of South Georgia. 1/ Argentina and Great Britain have both claimed sovereignty over these islands since Spain withdrew its garrison in 1811. Having occupied the islands, Argentina is quickly attempting to consolidate its political and military hold over the Falklands, inhabited by approximately 1,800 English-speaking people who identify themselves as British subjects. Meanwhile, the British government, outraged and embarrassed by what it sees as an illegal seizure, has dispatched a task force of approximately 40 war ships to restore British control should diplomatic efforts fail to convince the Argentines to withdraw.

The United States, caught between its closest ally, Britain, and Argentina, a major Latin American nation with which America is trying to improve its relations, has offered to mediate the dispute in hopes of finding a peaceful resolution. The United States is concerned that if Britain attempts to retake the Falklands by force it will create Latin American bitterness toward the Western Alliance and perhaps cause the Argentines to move closer to the Soviet

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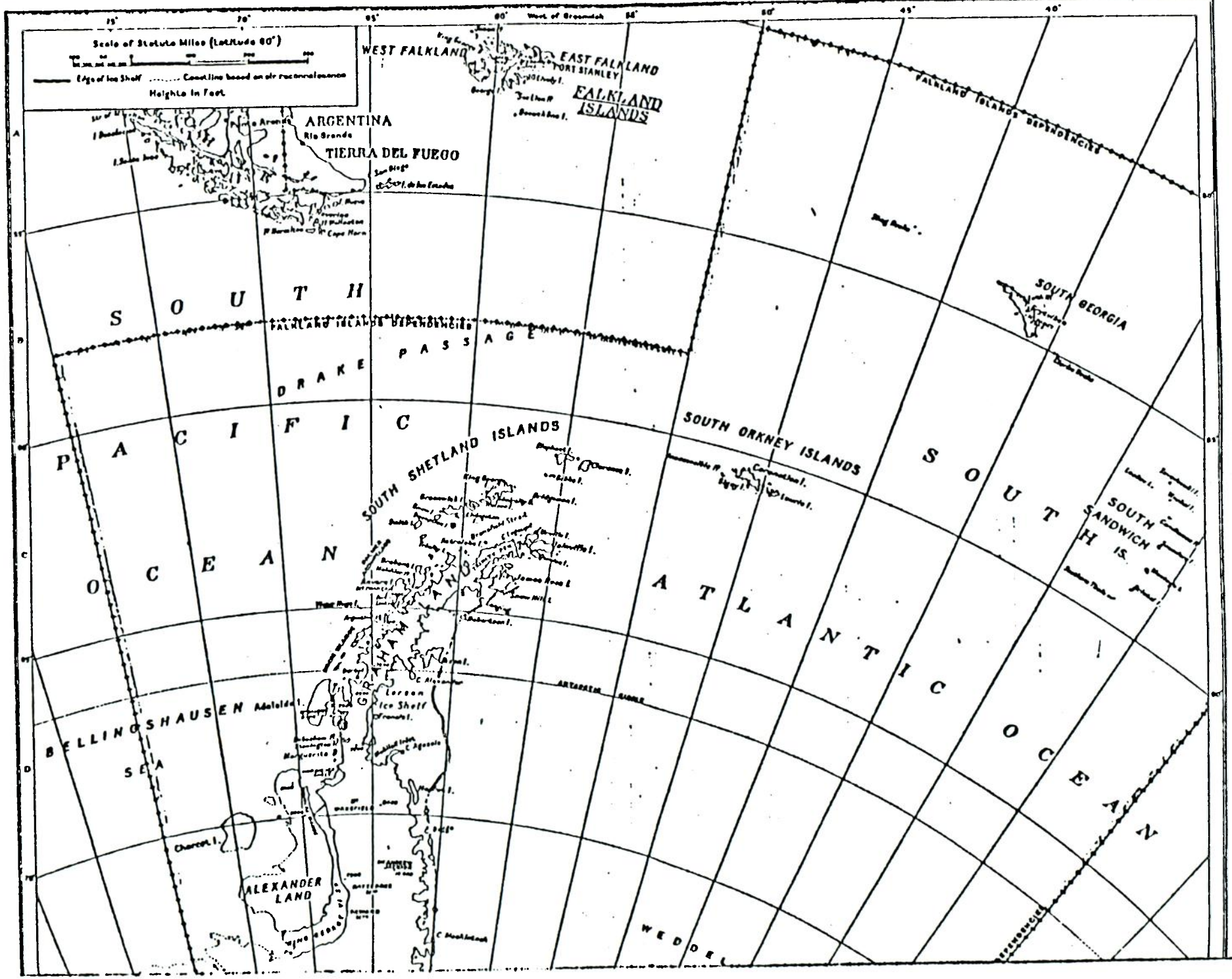
1/ The Argentine government occupied previously unpopulated South Thule, the southernmost island in the South Sandwich chain (also a dependency of the Falklands) in 1976.

Union or to be less supportive of U.S. policies in Central America. The U.S. is also aware that a British military confrontation over the Falklands would probably require a long-term British military and naval presence in the area which would ultimately diminish Britain's ability to maintain its NATO commitments.

The immediate role undertaken by the United States is to find a formula for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.


Scale of Statute Miles (Latitude 60°)
Edge of Ice Shelf
Coastline based on air reconnaissance
Heights in Feet
West of Greenwich
WEST FALKLAND
EAST FALKLAND
PORT STANLEY
FALKLAND ISLANDS
FALKLAND ISLANDS DEPENDENCIES
ARGENTINA
Rio Grande
TIERRA DEL FUEGO
SOUTH GEORGIA
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
DRAKE PASSAGE
SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS
SOUTH ORKNEY ISLANDS
SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
SOUTH SANDWICH IS.
GRAHAM LAND
Larsen Ice Shelf
BELLINGSHAUSEN SEA
Adelaide I.
Charcot I.
ALEXANDER LAND
WEDDEL
ANTARCTIC CIRCLE

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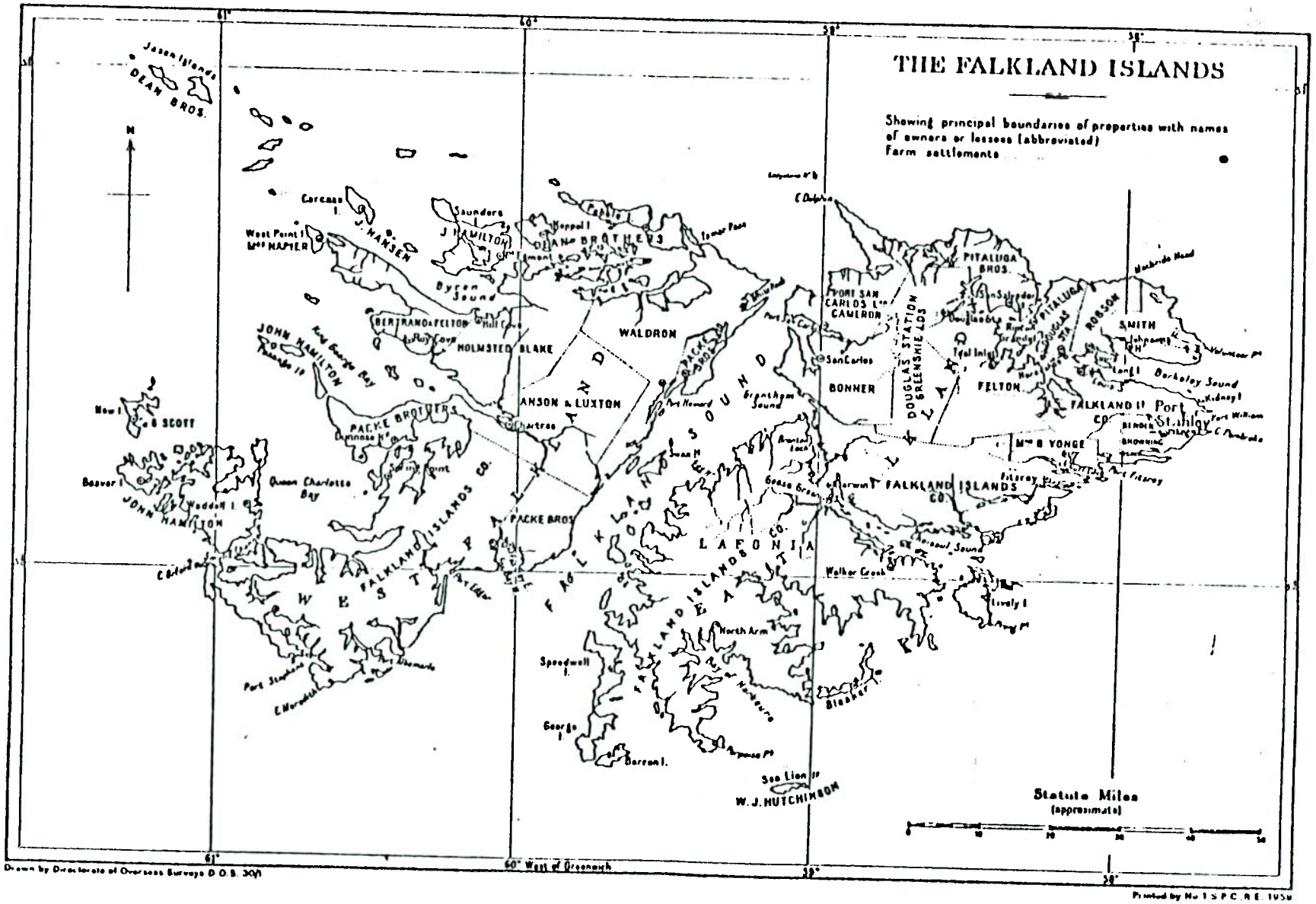
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS
Showing principal boundaries of properties with names of owners or lessees (abbreviated)
Farm settlements
Jason Islands
DEAN BROS.
N
Carcass I.
J. HANSEN
West Point I.
Mrs NAPIER
Saunders I.
J. HAMILTON
Keppel I.
DEAN BROTHERS
Byron Sound
BERTRAND & FELTON
Hill Cove
Ruby Cove
JOHN HAMILTON
King George Bay
HOLMSTED BLAKE
WALDRON
ANSON & LUXTON
Chartres
PACKE BROTHERS
Dunnose Head
New I.
Mrs B SCOTT
Beaver I.
Queen Charlotte Bay
Weddell I.
JOHN HAMILTON
Salvador Point
PACKE BROS.
WEST FALKLAND
FALKLAND ISLANDS CO.
Port Stephens
C. Meredith
Port Howard
Brenchom Sound
Swan Inlet
Goose Green
LAFONIA
PACKE BROS.
Walker Creek
Speedwell I.
George I.
Barren I.
Sea Lion I.
W. J. HUTCHINSON
North Arm
Fox Bay
Bleaker I.
EAST FALKLAND
FALKLAND ISLANDS CO.
PORT SAN CARLOS Mrs CAMERON
C. Dolphin
San Carlos
BONNER
DOUGLAS STATION
GREENSHIELDS
PITALUGA BROS.
Mt. Usborne
PITALUGA
ROBSON
SMITH
Berkeley Sound
Kidney I.
FELTON
FALKLAND IS. Port CO.
Stanley
Port Williams
C. Pembroke
Mrs B YONGE
FALKLAND ISLANDS CO.
Fitzroy
Arrowsmith Sound
Lively I.
Statute Miles
(approximate)
0 10 20 30 40 50
Drawn by Directorate of Overseas Surveys D.O.S. 3091
60° West of Greenwich
Printed by Nu-I S.P.C.R.E. 1954
3044/6/58/10344/8

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II. BACKGROUND

The Falklands, a group of treeless, windswept islands, are located about 350 miles east of Tierra del Fuego, off Argentina's extreme southeast coast. The Falklands comprise 2 main islands and 200 smaller ones, and occupy an area of 4,700 square miles. There are fewer than 2,000 islanders, mostly of British origin, half of whom live in the capital, Stanley. The islands have been a source of contention between Great Britain and Argentina since Spain withdrew its garrison in 1811. Argentina has continuously claimed the Falklands under a provision contained in its emancipation from Spain, wherein territories under Spanish administration would transfer to the newly-independent nation. At the time Argentina received its independence in 1816, the islands were uninhabited. The islands shortly thereafter became a base for British and American sealing and whaling industries, and temporary settlements by British nationals were established. In 1823, the Buenos Aires government appointed a Falkland Islands administration backed by a small group of soldiers; but, in 1831, after complaints from sealers about Argentine interference with their trade, an American warship expelled the Argentine soldiers and administrators. The remaining Argentines inhabitants were expelled by a British warship in 1832. The following year Britain claimed sovereignty over the Falklands and established a permanent colony.

Beginning in 1964, Argentina asserted its claims to the Falklands in the United Nations, calling for direct negotiations with the British government. In 1965, the United Nations Decolonization Committee ordered Britain and Argentina to begin negotiations toward a resolution. Little progress toward that end, however, has been made over the past 17 years.

A. The Argentine Point of View

Argentina has long contested British claims to sovereignty over the Falklands — which the Argentines call the Malvinas Islands. Its seizure of the islands on April 2, Argentina contends, followed protests for the past 149 years and fruitless negotiations for the past 17 years — negotiations which Argentina states that it unsuccessfully tried to accelerate recently.

Argentina holds that the British settlement of islands cannot constitute the basis for claims of sovereignty because the British settled there after forcibly expelling Argentine settlers in 1833 and because Britain had previously recognized Argentina's prior historical claims to sovereignty over the islands. Argentina also contends that Britain is acting there as a colonial power, and points to various documents of the United Nations and of the Organization of American States (OAS) calling for the end of colonial possessions in the world and in the western hemisphere.

In a speech April 5, 1982, to the OAS permanent council, the Argentine Foreign Minister Nicanor Costa Mendez debated the right of the islands' 1,800 inhabitants to self-determination under international law. He argued that the inhabitants do not constitute a "people," asserting that most of them are employees of either the British government or the Falkland Islands Company, which he described as a tool for promoting empirial interests, and that many are only temporary residents.

Argentina's assertions of sovereignty over the islands have long been a point of intense nationalistic sentiment. Sovereignty over the Islands and their dependencies also form the basis for Argentina's claim to the Antarctic, as Argentina traces its territorial claim there along a diagonal

drawn from the South Sandwich islands. 1/ Interest in exploitation of the islands' natural resources has intensified in recent years as Argentina has begun awarding risk contracts to international oil companies for off-shore exploration along its southern Atlantic coast. Test wells reportedly have produced crude from a geological formation believed to extend to the islands, suggesting that sizable deposits may lie around the islands. The British reportedly contested one of the contracts as it included part of the islands' territorial waters. The Argentines reportedly also have expressed interest in fishing those waters.

Argentina's military invasion took place as the presidency of General Leopoldo Galtieri was under severe political and economic stress. An annual inflation rate running at nearly 150 percent, a decline in GDP, and rising unemployment had Argentina's powerful labor unions primed for a general strike planned for the first week in April; police had killed two participants in a large and violent labor demonstration on March 30. In January, a former military junta member, retired Admiral Emilio Massera, demanded an accounting of the fates of the people who have "disappeared" for political reasons since the 1976 military coup. That demand also has been voiced by Argentina's traditionally conservative Roman Catholic Church. Political parties are insisting on a promise that elections will be held in 1984, a concession the government under Gen. Galtieri has not been willing to give. The Catholic Church also has called for a return to democracy and the rule of constitutional law. Nationalist pride aroused by the islands' seizure reportedly has brought Galtieri's government a measure of support, staving off political criticism, and a buying grace

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1/ If Britain lost is claim to the Falkland Islands and dependencies, it would also jeopardize some of its claims in Antarctica.

period during which economic adjustment measures might take effect and reverse growing popular discontent. The occupation of the islands appears to have shored up, at least temporarily, Galtieri's faltering government.

Support for Argentina's action has been strongest from Latin American countries, although even that support is tempered. Most Latin American nations have affirmed their support of Argentine claims to sovereignty over the islands but have not extended that support to Argentina's use of force in asserting those claims. Brazil reportedly has refused Britain permission to refuel ships in Brazilian ports.

B. The British Point of View

Argentina's seizure of the Falkland Islands has proven humiliating and frustrating to many Britons, for whom the incident has served as another reminder of the decline of British power. Moreover, there has been widespread anger over the government's handling of the crisis, especially after reports from British intelligence sources indicated that the government knew of the existence of an Argentine invasion force (though not its intent) several days prior to the invasion. Public and parliamentary unhappiness over the incident has created a major crisis for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government. Lord Carrington, Britain's Foreign Secretary, and two of his principal aides resigned because of strong parliamentary criticism. Some observers believe that should a favorable resolution to the dispute not be reached, the Thatcher government might be forced to resign.

In reaction to the Argentine invasion, Britain has thus far broken diplomatic relations with Argentina, frozen Argentina's financial assets in Britain, suspended new export credits, banned Argentine exports to the United Kingdom and ordered a large naval task force to the South Atlantic. Although

official British statements reflect the government's foremost desire to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means, Mrs. Thatcher has made it clear that "the Falkland Islands and their dependencies remain British territory . . . . It is the Government's object to see the islands are free from occupation." On April 7, Britain declared a 200-mile war zone around the Falkland Islands. Defense Secretary John Nott told the House of Commons that from the morning of April 12, "any Argentine warships and Argentine auxiliaries found within this zone will be treated as hostile and are liable to be attacked by British forces." Defense Secretary Nott confirmed, "If we have to fight we will, and we are not going to fight unless we win."

The British argue that the Falklands, one of Britain's last remaining colonies, is effectively and legally theirs. The British inhabitants, who have been living on the island for the last 150 years, are the only "natives." The islanders are fiercely opposed to Argentine control, having voted seven to one in last year's legislative council session to freeze sovereignty negotiations between Britain and Argentina. The British government has taken a position of willingness to negotiate the sovereignty question with the Argentines as late as February of this year, with the reservation that Great Britain must abide by the wishes of the 1,800 islanders before any changes over control of the island are considered.

Most foreign governments urged both British and Argentine restraint in settling the Falklands dispute. The U.N. Security Council voted on April 3 in favor of a resolution condemning the Argentine invasion and calling for immediate withdrawal from the islands. Governments who showed support for the British response included:

-- Canada and Australia, which withdrew their ambassadors from Buenos Aires for consultations and banned military shipments to Argentina;

-- New Zealand, which broke diplomatic relations with Argentina;

-- the European Community, which has condemned the Argentine show of force and has approved a total ban on imports from Argentina. [The Falkland Islands are specifically defined to be a part of the territory of the European Community by the Treaty of Rome. [A statement released after the April 6 meeting of the EC Executive Commission in Brussels expressed solidarity with the British government and implied concerted action by EC members in the event of serious international tension; and,

-- the Federal Republic of Germany, which announced that in accordance with the War Weapons Control Law, the government will cease the construction and delivery of German submarines and other warships unless Argentina withdraws from the Falklands. The Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, and Austria have imposed similar bans.

III. NON-MILITARY MEANS OF RESOLUTION

A. Political and Economic Sources of Leverage

1. Argentina

Argentina's leverage on Britain to accept a negotiated settlement is limited largely to the costs and risks of hostilities for Britain. Argentina hopes the United States, which has more direct influence with Britain, will be able to persuade the British to compromise on a solution acceptable to Argentina. Under the Reagan Administration, the United States has actively courted Argentina as an ally in anti-communist stands in South and Central America. To preserve that carefully constructed relationship, the United States appears compelled to push for a negotiated settlement which would recognize Argentine claims in order not to have to choose sides. Among Argentina's sources of leverage to promote a negotiated settlement are:

-- the military and economic costs to Britain of engaging in military conflict;

- the domestic political and economic costs to Britain of maintaining a military presence in the islands to safeguard any victory;
- the international political cost which a British military action would incur among its Latin American allies and trading partners;
- the United States' desire to promote and preserve Argentina as a strong regional ally;
- the support which most Latin American nations give to Argentina's claims to sovereignty over the islands, among them other close friends of the U.S. such as Venezuela, a key partner in the U.S. position in Central America;
- the difficulty and expense to the British of replacing the supply, communications, and transport networks with the islands that now run out of Argentina;
- the difficulty for Britain in engaging in military activities 8,000 miles from home base, complicated by Brazil's reported refusal to allow British ships to refuel in Brazilian ports.
- the potential threat of harm to the island's 1,8000 inhabitants who effectively are now at risk in their homes and the reported 17,000 British citizens now in Argentina.

2. Great Britain

Possible sources of leverage for the British and its supporters against Argentina include:

(1) economic sanctions: The ban on Argentine imports to the European Community could have serious consequences for Argentina, which exported more than $2.3 billion worth of goods — or about 40 percent of its total exports to the EC in 1980. Latest figures show that the Common Market enjoys a $457 million surplus in its trade with Argentina. The EC ban means that Argentina would lose as much as $40 million in trade each week with Western Europe. Britain has already frozen Argentine assets, banned Argentine imports to Britain, and cancelled new commercial contracts. The British action is estimated to apply to about $1.5 billion in gold, securities and currency deposits, one-quarter of what Britain is believed to have at risk in Argentina.

The import ban will cancel about $200 million worth of Argentine food products and goods sent to Britain annually.

(2) bans on military sales: Argentina, largely with the help of West Germany, has aspirations of becoming Latin America's leading military power and an important arms merchant for the Third World. The Argentines have already received diesel submarines and frigates from West Germany. Other contracts for radar and telemetry systems, an underwater test range for torpedos, tanks and other warships were underway until recent events. According to a Der Spiegel article, German naval contracts have run into the billions in the last five years. Argentina has also purchased substantial quantities of military equipment from Italy, France, Austria, and the United States. In 1981, Britain sold $22 million in arms to Argentina.

(3) loss of British cooperation in joint exploration and development of potential off-shore oil resources.

(4) resistance of the local Falkland population to Argentine sovereignty and control.

B. Potential Mediators

1. The United Nations

In the long-running dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina over respective claims to the Falkland islands, the United Nations has played only a marginal role. It has largely stayed on the fringes of the controversy, either providing a forum for contact and negotiations, or applying pressure to the British and Argentines to resolve their differences in a timely fashion, as the U.N. Decolonization Committee did in 1965.

Following the April 2 Argentine invasion of the Falklands, Britain introduced a resolution into the Security Council demanding Argentine withdrawal. A reso-

lution -- demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities and immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falklands and calling on the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences -- was passed in the Security Council by a vote of ten in favor, one opposed (Panama) and four abstentions (the Soviet Union, China, Poland, and Spain).

2. The Organization of American States

On April 8, Colombia requested the 30-member OAS to act as an intermediary in settling the dispute but discussion on its request was postponed. Argentina has suggested that it may request invoking the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) if Britain takes hostile action. One option of the treaty's organ of consultation would be to take any of a range of sanctions against Britain if it accepts Argentine claims to sovereignty and if Britain is seen as committing an aggressive act threatening hemispheric peace. Participation in all sanctions except the use of armed force is binding on the 20 active parties to the treaty, including the United States, unless they suffer economic hardship from implementing the sanctions. (A two-thirds vote would be required to adopt sanctions.)

3. The United States' Role

After failing to persuade General Galtieri, the head of the Argentine junta, to call off the invasion of the Falklands on April 2, President Reagan offered to help in finding a "peaceful resolution" to the dispute. Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who has already met with both the British and Argentine ambassadors to the United States, will act as the primary U.S. mediator. Haig flew to London on April 8 and Buenos Aires on April 9 to further ascertain both

nations' positions. U.S. officials extended their friendship to both Argentina and Britain and reiterated America's desire not to be forced to choose sides. The United States has not thus far announced any specific proposals. Although, neither party to the dispute has recognized the United States as the "official" mediator to the conflict, both nations have been receptive to U.S. efforts to engage in talks.

Initial U.S. diplomatic efforts seem to be centering around ways to satisfy Argentina's demand for sovereignty over the Falklands while allaying Britain's concern about the well-being and status of the 1,800 British subjects living on the islands. This will not be an easy task as Britain thus far has refused to negotiate so long as Argentine military forces remain in the Falklands, and Argentina has refused to withdraw militarily until Britain acknowledges Argentine sovereignty.

Two options discussed by British and Argentine negotiators in the last decade include a joint British-Argentine government, similar to Franco-Spanish administration of Andorra, and a lease-back plan, under which Argentina would be given sovereignty but Britain would lease the islands for a specified period of time similar to the arrangement Britain now has with Hong Kong. In this second option, some formula for dividing fishing and oil rights would be negotiated.

The major problem with either of these options, or any other alternative that third parties to the dispute might suggest, is that it is politically difficult for any British government to ignore the principle of self-determination, as expressed in the near-unanimous desire by the islanders to "keep the Falklands British." Moreover, any new course in British policy that changes the status of the Falklands will require parliamentary approval. Both past and present efforts to change the Falkland's status suggest that the British Parliament will constitute a formidable obstacle, especially since a recent public opinion

poll indicated that 88 percent of the British population believes that the United Kingdom has an obligation to support the Falkland Islanders.

The United States has already taken a position on the Falkland dispute by voting in the majority for the U.N. Security Council resolution demanding that Argentina withdraw its military forces. Britain regards this action as support for its position. On the other hand, Argentina, which refuses to withdraw its troops, is counting on the United States to dissuade Britain from taking military action and to get Britain to recognize Argentine claims over the islands. Whatever course of action the United States adopts, it will likely require tightrope diplomacy. U.S. State Department officials has said that America's best interests lie in maintaining close ties with both the Argentine and British governments and that to avoid choosing sides its best course lies in facilitating negotiations that lead to a peaceful settlement before military action occurs.

IV. MILITARY RESOLUTION

A. Possibilities for Military Action

1. Argentine Options

The Argentine fleet, consisting primarily of aged combatant vessels, is outnumbered by the Royal Navy Task Force (RNTF), and it would probably have difficulty defending itself against the British forces, especially British nuclear attack submarines. Accordingly, the following military options seem likely for Argentina to consider.

As a first option, Argentina could withdraw its naval forces from the waters around the Falklands, having first sealifted military equipment and

supplies from Argentina to the islands. This action appears to have been taken following Britain's declaration of a 200-mile maritime exclusion zone around the Falklands. In the minds of some analysts, this British measure, enforced beginning April 12, came too late to prevent the Argentines from establishing a strong defensive position. Following the initial Argentine landing with an estimated 4,500 Marines, reinforcements by sea and air have increased troop strength to between 6,000 and 8,000 according to reports from Buenos Aires. Equipment arriving with these forces probably has included artillery, armored vehicles and air defense systems. The airfield at Stanley, which is long enough for C-130 transports to land on, has been receiving supplies (fuel, ammunition) by airlift. It has the only improved runway on the islands, and efforts may be underway to lengthen that runway to permit the operation of combat aircraft from the islands. Argentina could thus hope to oppose a possible British landing force with numerical superiority in ground forces and in tactical air forces. Even with a longer runway, however, the installation at Stanley might not be able to support the combat operations of an air force squadron, since extensive operational and maintenance facilities would be required as well.

Second, the Argentines may plan to withstand a British naval blockade of the islands, without taking offensive action against the Royal Navy Task Force either from the air or from the sea. The ability of the Argentines to outlast the British in such a stand-off could depend upon the extent to which Argentina has already supplied its forces on the island, since Argentina could not count on a continued airlift.

A third Argentine option could be to challenge the blockading forces. That option probably would have to be exercised while the Argentine Air Force

had use of the airfield, if only for refueling. The airfield at Stanley may not be a useful asset in any case, however, and some analysts argue that A-4s based in Argentina (locations 500 and 600 miles away) can still be brought to bear, since they can be refueled by aerial tankers. Argentina has only two such tankers, however. Accordingly, Argentine actions against a blockading force would likely be piecemeal, intended more for psychological effects on the British forces and gradual attrition.

Withdrawal of Argentine naval forces from the 200-mile zone may indicate an Argentine assessment that British naval forces, superior in number and in equipment, could overcome any Argentine attack. If the RNTF were to attempt an attack on the Argentine mainland, however, a full response by their Navy would be expected. The response to a possible British blockade of Buenos Aires, mentioned as a possibility by some, might also be a forceful one.

2. British Options

Once the Royal Navy Task Force nears its destination, a choice among three basic strategies seems necessary, if military action is to be pursued. Each carries the risk of escalation to more violent conflict. First, the RNTF could mount an operation against Argentina itself; the scenario most frequently discussed is a blockade of Buenos Aires, either to exert economic pressures on Argentina and compel its withdrawal from the Falklands, or to add strength to the British negotiating position. This choice would expose British forces most directly to attack by land-based air forces, which is Argentina's primary military advantage.

Second, the RNTF could steam directly to the area of the Falklands, and conduct a blockade of the islands. Without actually landing on the Falklands,

such an operation would seek to isolate Argentine units on the islands and challenge Argentine control there. Given that Argentine forces are being prepared for such a blockade, a long stand-off could result; meanwhile, the advantages the British might seek for their negotiating position could be offset by the fact that Falkland Islanders would be potential hostages of the Argentines. British efforts at establishing a blockade could be resisted not only by Argentine naval forces now withdrawn from the area, but perhaps by attack aircraft as well. Nevertheless, this British option would exploit Argentina's major weakness: a sea line of communication between the mainland and the Falklands that is vulnerable to attack, especially by advanced British submarines. Depending upon the Argentines' ability to provide fighter escort for an airlift in this situation, the British could impose a quarantine of the islands by air. Air defense of their fleet, however, could be degraded if Harrier aircraft are assigned the mission of enforcing such a quarantine. Accordingly, bombing the airfield seems more likely, especially since it is more important to Argentina than it would be later to Britain.

As a third alternative, the RNTF could undertake an amphibious assault on East Falkland Island, with the immediate objectives of gaining control over the port and the airfield at Stanley. The task force includes assault ships with landing craft and perhaps as many as 5,000 Marines embarked for such a contingency. British control of the port would permit them to bring ashore material necessary to expand and consolidate their position on the islands against armed resistance. British control of the airfield would deny Argentina the ability to reinforce or resupply their forces or to refuel combat strike aircraft that could not fly the return distance to Argentine bases ("shuttle bombing"). Conversely, seizure of the airfield without damaging it would permit British reinforcement and resupply. Nimrod AWACS aircraft

could not operate from there, leaving Ascension Island, about 3,500 miles distant, as the nearest base on British soil for those aircraft.

B. Military Strengths and Weaknesses

As shown on the following table, the primary Argentine strength is its land-based air forces. There is considerable question, however, over the extent to which Argentine Air Force squadrons would be able to participate in a battle near the Falklands. Some elements would probably remain committed to the defense of other regions in Argentina. Others are not suited to operations over water. Out of the total aircraft inventory, an unknown number will be found unserviceable, due to the combination of age and unavailability of spare parts. In the case of newly-delivered Super Etendard aircraft, with as many as 12 reported in Argentine hands, pilot training may be minimal. The useful range of the various Argentine aircraft (e.g., A-4P Skyhawks, Mirage IIIs) is a critical question, especially if all aircraft remain based on the Argentine mainland. If refueling were available from aerial tankers or at the Stanley airfield (where aircraft reportedly could stop over on the return leg only of a combat mission), the Argentine Air Force would be in a better position to exploit their force advantage.

Up to 15 Argentine Navy A-4Q planes, from the carrier 25 de Mayo, could add to the Argentine air capability; and with a maximum unrefueled combat radius of about 300-400 miles, these Skyhawks could be launched from beyond the offensive range of British Sea Harrier V/STOL aircraft. The Sea Harrier is not well suited for anti-ship attacks, however, and the RNTF would probably rely on submarines to attack the Argentine carrier or other ships. Accordingly, the Sea Harriers in a naval conflict should be viewed in the role of fleet air defense; and they are widely regarded as highly capable systems, because of

their maneuverability and their armament, the Improved Sidewinder. The RNTF's Invincible and Hermes together are carrying 16-20 Sea Harriers, and they are backed up by Sea Dart and other surface-to-air missile systems on those carriers and all the destroyers as well. To overcome this fleet air defense capability, the Argentines would probably have to risk a large number of aircraft; and unless the airfield at Stanley could be used as a base of operations for the land-based element, the Argentines would have difficulty in asserting air superiority over the British forces.

The primary British advantage at sea is its submarine force, comprised of advanced nuclear-powered models that can outrun most Argentine surface combatants. Two of these attack submarines are preceding the RNTF on its way to the South Atlantic, joining the Superb, which is reported to be in the vicinity of the Falklands already. The Argentine withdrawal of naval vessels from the 200-mile zone around the Falklands, as demanded by Britain, seems to reflect their recognition of the nuclear submarine's capabilities.

The four Argentine submarines present a lesser threat to the RNTF, because they are less capable, and because advanced British anti-submarine warfare capabilities are incorporated extensively throughout the task force. Despite this British advantage, the two newer Argentine submarines could lie in wait undetected and attack British ships, if they correctly anticipated the course of the task force's approach. The RNTF presumably will approach the Falklands from the East. This would permit the British to stay outside the range of Argentine aircraft for as long as possible.

The RNTF now includes the amphibious assault ship Fearless, and may be joined later by its sister ship, the Intrepid, according to one report. Each of these ships, carrying a number of landing craft, could put a commando group (800 marines) ashore if the RNTF can approach within landing craft range. The

V GB D

fz2 submarines

Hermes is also believed to have marines aboard, probably about 400. The greatest number of Marines, 2,000 by one report, are being transported on the 49,000-ton Canberra, a commercial liner taken over for this purpose and apparently being adapted for putting Marines ashore by helicopters. Argentine mines could hinder an amphibious landing, but their mine warfare capability has yet to be described publicly.

The RNTF would have the advantage of the initiative in choosing where to land; but the Argentines have the advantage in numbers of ground forces overall. The success of a British landing would depend on the size and the capabilities of the landing force and the defending forces positioned to oppose it. If the landing succeeded, the greatest British weakness would come into play: the extended lines of supply back to Britian.

Argentine Capabilities

	Argentine Forces
AIRCRAFT 1/	
Land-based aircraft	
Bombers	9 B-62 Canberra
Fighter/attack	68 A-4P Skyhawk
	26 Dagger (Nesher)
	86 Other
Interceptors	20 Mirage III
Major transport	7 C-130 Hercules
	6 C-47
Tankers	2 KC-130
Maritime Patrol	10 SP-2H Neptune
Sea-based aircraft	
(On carriers)	(1)
Fighter/attack	15 A-4Q Skyhawks
Surveillance	6 S-2A/E Tracker
Anti-submarine helo.	4 S-61D Sea King
(On assault ships)	(-)
Assault helo.	
(On other combatants)	(6)
Anti-submarine helo.	2 Lynx WG-13
	2 Puma, 3 Allouette
MAJOR SHIPS	
Carriers	1
Amphibious Assault Ships	1 Landing ship (dock), 1 Landing ship (tank)
Attack Submarines	4 Diesel
Cruisers	1
Destroyers 2/	2 Guided missile
	7
Frigates	2
Corvettes	15
Tankers	1
Depot/Support ships	1
Transport ships	2

1/ Not all Argentine Air Force squadrons would be committed to the south, since fighters would probably be kept to defend other areas as well, and since some are less suited than the A-4s for combat missions over the ocean. In addition, only a part of the inventory show here should be considered serviceable, especially in view of the advanced age of most of the aircraft. New Super Etendard fighters ordered from France may have been partially delivered (reportedly as many as 12). Although they are intended for use on the carriers, they cannot yet be deployed at sea. They might add to the land-based force shown here, however. Argentine air-to-surface armament is roughly comparable to that of the British force; air-to-air armament is considered inferior to the Improved Sidewinder in use with British aircraft.

2/ All destroyers have anti-submarine capability; guided missile destroyers are also equipped with modern surface-to-air missiles for fleet air defense.

British Capabilities

Total British Navy Forces Afloat and Embarked

AIRCRAFT 1/

Sea-based aircraft		
(On carriers)		(2)
Fighter/attack	16	Sea Harrier V/STOL
Surveillance	-	
Anti-submarine helo.	21	Sea King Mk 2/5
(On assault ships)		(2)
Assault helo.	10	Wessex Mk 5
(On other combatants)		(59)
Anti-submarine helo.	7	Lynx Mk 2
	6	Wessex
	46	Wasp/Lynx (vary w/ frigates)

MAJOR SHIPS

Carriers	2	(Up to 400 marines each)
Amphibious Warfare Ships	2	Assault ships (800 marines each)
	1	Helicopter support ship
	6	Logistic landing ships
Attack Submarines	16	Diesel
	12	Nuclear
Cruisers	0	
Destroyers	14	Guided missile
Frigates	45	
Corvettes	-	
Tankers	14	
Depot/Support ships	6	
Transport ships	(2)	

Identified Elements of Royal Naval Task Force 1/

Carriers	2	(Invincible, Hermes)
Amphibious Assault Ships	1	(Fearless)
Attack Submarines	3	Nuclear (Superb and 2 others)
Passenger Ship	1	Canberra
Container Ship	1	Elk

1/ The RNTF reportedly consists of 35-40 ships; the balance presumably is made up of destroyers, frigates, other amphibious warfare ships, and support ships, including tankers. One press account specifies 2 light cruisers, 5 destroyers, 5 landing ships, 4 fleet oil tankers, and 3 supply ships. (Washington Post, April 10, 1982, p. A9). The sister ship to the Fearless, the Intrepid, is reportedly nearing the completion of overhaul work and could follow the task force at a later time if necessary. All British destroyers are equipped with surface-to-air armament to provide fleet air defense. The high number of sea-based helicopters represents anti-submarine warfare capability in the British fleet generally and in individual platforms as well. No diesel submarines would be included in the Task Force.

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V. IMPLICATIONS OF THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

If a negotiated resolution of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands fails and Britain resorts to the use of military measures, the United States and its NATO allies must be prepared to face a number of potential economic, political and security consequences of such action. These include:

1. Britain already is expending a considerable sum of money to dispatch a task force 8,000 miles to the Falkland Islands. Britain would face additional costs should the need for a sustained naval presence be required in the area. In the event of conflict with Argentina, the consequences to Britain of the replacement of potential losses in ships and aircraft would place severe strains on the already weakened British economy, to say nothing of the strains on new defense plans, including the scheduled modernization of Britain's strategic nuclear force with the purchase of the new U.S. Trident missile system.

2. Britain would be unable to fully meet its NATO responsibilities if a continued military presence were required in the South Atlantic or if it sustained substantial naval losses. The United States and/or other Western European powers would be required to take up the slack in order to maintain credible NATO defenses in Europe. Of particular importance, a weakening or loss of British capabilities, notably its surface and anti-submarine-warfare capabilities, would seriously impair NATO's ability to patrol the North Atlantic sea lanes and would be difficult to replace. In addition, Britain undoubtedly would be forced to withdraw its naval contributions to the Western presence in the Indian Ocean.

3. The Argentine military seizure of the Falklands already implies a dangerous precedent for other states involved in disputed territorial claims in Latin America, Spain, the Indian Ocean — including the Persian Gulf — and the Pacific. The United States and its Western European allies could find themselves drawn into these disputes either diplomatically, or more seriously, militarily.

4. A military confrontation increases the potential for an escalation of the crisis to include other Latin American countries or possibly even the Soviet Union. Such an escalation of the conflict would create a dilemma for U.S. policy with regard to U.S. interests in and commitments to Latin America and Britain/NATO.

5. An unfavorable British outcome to the crisis could result in the fall of the Thatcher Conservative government and its replacement by a government less supportive of U.S. policy and objectives with respect to the Atlantic Alliance. Likewise, an unsuccessful resolution of the crisis for Argentina could likely cause the fall of General Galtieri's government, resulting in a very unstable and uncertain political environment.

Pol.